

Oct. 19, 2021

Good afternoon. My name is Alex Baca and I am a proponent of ZC order 16-11.

I fully support the redevelopment of Bruce Monroe and Park Morton. My only wish is that both projects were denser and taller, with the resulting increased value reinvested into more subsidized, affordable units, from studio apartments to family-sized flats and townhomes. However, rather than object to this project on the grounds that it is not enough of one thing or another, I spent about three years advocating for higher-density Future Land Use Map designations for sites, including the ones in question here, in my work on amendments to the Comprehensive Plan as policy manager for Greater Greater Washington.

Please note, however, that I am testifying today as a Park View resident, and that my comments should not be construed as on behalf of my employer—even though GGWash and I think the same from time to time. Like GGWash, I believe that the production of more homes, paired with greater tenant- or project-based subsidies for extremely low and low-income households in particular, is not the sole need, but certainly the greatest need, of the majority of District residents at this time.

My understanding of this special public hearing is that it is only on the matter of whether the revised order for Bruce Monroe meets the requirements of the D.C. Court of Appeals' remand. In my reading, Bruce Monroe is consistent with both the Comp Plan as written in 2006, and amendments to that document, which were finalized this past September. Therefore, I am a proponent of ZC 16-11.

I feel wholly represented by ANC 1A, which has continually supported Park Morton and Bruce Monroe, and agrees that it is in compliance with the Comp Plan. Likewise, Councilmember Brianne Nadeau has continually advocated for the completion of this project.

Since my elected officials are capably representing me, it's not necessary for me to be here. But comments at the Zoning Commission's July meeting, about holding this meeting being "the right thing to do" because "people want to have public input," were not so much a call to civic duty as they were a red flag. People who, like me, are totally fine with Bruce Monroe, and are thrilled that Park Morton is breaking ground, don't tend to show up to these things, because they expect representative government to be working for them (and, in this specific instance, it is!). Satisfaction, and the belief that government processes are working fine enough, is not a motivator, but righteous opposition—or, sometimes, basically, anger, fear, and shame—is.

I've learned that without careful organizing and outreach, people who show up, broadly, have bones to pick, even well-intentioned ones. Those bones tend to be ideological and romantic, and therefore hard to match up with the much more prosaic bones of something as complex and bureaucratic as redeveloping public housing—two different skeletons, if you will. Fusing them may be possible, but doing so at this particular point in time is a deviation from the sort of critical path that I, personally, try to hew to when managing projects.

To me, the District has so far failed to provide one-to-one replacement of public housing, which is one of the few surefire anti-displacement policies. Redeveloping Park Morton and Bruce Monroe represent our best opportunity to build dignified places for people to live, regardless of their income. This was true under the 2006 Comp Plan from the outset, and the recent amendments make it clearer that the proposal for Bruce Monroe was not and is not in conflict with the text or the FLUM.

As a Park View resident, I would prefer not to be asked about this again. I look forward to, finally, the replacement of a temporary park with housing that will in part be more affordable than the private market can or will provide.

Thank you,  
Alex

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